

MERITER HEALTH SERVICES | PENSION LAWSUIT SETTLED FOR \$82 MILLION

4,000 to get about \$14,000 each in Meriter pension lawsuit settlement


 7 HOURS AGO • BY [DAVID WAHLBERG](#) | [WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL](#)

Some 4,000 Meriter Health Services employees will get an average of \$14,000 in an \$82 million settlement of a class-action lawsuit over Meriter's pension plan, according to settlement details filed this week.

A dozen people named as plaintiffs will each get an additional \$5,000. Another 2,000 people will each get about \$250.

With attorneys fees and costs amounting to \$25.6 million, more than \$56 million will be allocated to about 6,000 people in 11 classes in

the suit alleging that Meriter's pension plan miscalculated benefits from 1987 to this year.

Both parties have agreed to the \$82 million settlement, but the terms won't become final until a judge decides whether to approve it on or after Jan. 5.

The lawsuit, filed in 2010, alleges that pension payments for thousands of Meriter employees were improperly calculated according to federal law.

U.S. District Judge William Conley ruled partly in Meriter's favor July 3, but he left open some claims for a trial that was scheduled to begin July 28. The settlement was reached July 23.

During settlement talks in June, Meriter offered \$21 million and increased the offer to \$24 million, according to settlement documents filed Monday.

The plaintiffs said they could have won \$270 million if they succeeded in all claims, according to the documents.

The 12 named plaintiffs are Phyllis Johnson, Madge English, Claudia Greco, Joyce Emerson, Sue Hansen, Donna Smith, Linda Muller, Michele McCabe, Krystal Wages, Ann Marie Stephens, Jill Anthony and Tammy Wetley, who was listed in the original lawsuit as Tammy Boyd.

Meriter Health Services became part of Iowa-based UnityPoint Health this year.

Last year, Meriter Hospital had \$454.3 million in revenue and \$428.5 million in expenses, for an

operating margin of \$25.8 million, or 5.7 percent, according to the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

James Arnett, Meriter's vice president of human resources, said in a memo to employees Tuesday that "Meriter is prepared to meet this settlement obligation and it will not affect our business operations."

Arnett wrote: "Meriter continues to deny all of the claims in the lawsuit, but reaching a resolution now will provide additional benefits to plan participants and allow Meriter to bring this matter to a close once and for all."